

# THE 24 INCH GAUGE

"Musings from a conservative Lutheran environmentalist Freemason in a Web 2.0 world"

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## Keeping Things Relevant

By admin | February 6, 2010

In my last post I talked about quality vs. quantity of members. This post will be more about keeping things relevant, which, at the end of the day, will probably increase membership, too.

How many meetings have you attended that went like this:

1. Introduction of pasts, dignitaries etc.
2. Reading of the minutes from the previous meetings
3. Reports of sick and distressed
4. Old business
5. New business
6. Closing after anywhere from 20 minutes to 2 hours later?

I have been to way more meetings like this than I care to count. Unfortunately it's typical of Masonic meetings and to me about as exciting and intellectually stimulating as watching the grass grow. This has to stop. Think back to why you joined Freemasonry. Was it to sit in endless business meetings like this or what was the reason? And after you received your degrees, did you come back the first time longing to sit through a business meeting full of minute-reading and bickering?

I didn't think so.

So why do we allow our meetings to be run like this?

At least in Ohio we are experiencing an influx of new members. And the great thing about this is that most of the new members are under 40, oftentimes under 30. However, unfortunately we don't see a lot of returning members, as outlined in my previous post.

Guys, we have got to change the way our meetings are structured, even if it means changing (Grand) Bylaws and Resolutions.

One thing I would like to see happen is that the minutes are made available before the meetings (maybe even distributed by email) and simply voted on to approve or amend, and not read in detail at every single stated meeting. That will significantly cut time from the meeting while still allowing transparency in the (previous) happenings of the Lodge/Chapter/Council/Commandery etc.

So what to do with that new-found time? Enter the Lodge/Chapter/Council/Commandery Education Officer!

One of the things I really liked about Freemasonry in Germany was the inclusion of true intellectual discussion and discourse in our meetings. Each meeting in which no degree work was set to be portrayed consisted of an intellectual subject, prepared by the membership and discussed thoroughly amongst those present. The Education

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Officer was not responsible for the preparation of the discussion, however he did have oversight into the dispensing of duties.

This is something I have tried to implement in my home Chapter as Chapter Education Officer. On stated meeting nights in which no degree work is planned we have discussions planned out. The rules of this are simple, and as follows:

Someone (either a volunteer or someone assigned) has to prepare a talk for 10-15 minutes. That person then has to lead a discussion for another 10-15 minutes.

My first talk was on Lessing and his beliefs surrounding natural vs. human law, and how Freemasonry shaped his thinking. We have also had discussions regarding Harry Truman, Masonic President and the History of the Royal Arch, as well as others. These talks have been invigorating and have seemed to spark interest in the membership.

The only unfortunate thing that has happened is that we only have 2 stated meetings per month. The first meeting is a combined "York Rite Night," which is back-to-back meetings with Chapter, Council and Commandery. Because of the time it takes to conduct these meetings we generally are not able to have any Masonic discussion of interest, as those meetings alone last until past 9:00. And the second stated meeting of the month generally involves degree work. This is a good thing, but until we are able to address the problems with the other stated meetings it leaves no time for the Masonic instruction and discussion that I would like to implement.

But I do know that there are a number of bodies that do have more time on their hands to do the type of work I am talking about. It's you that I am addressing.

Like I said, this should not be a one-man show. The Education Officer should, ideally, never give a talk or lead a discussion, but rather the membership of the body. The education officer's responsibility is to ensure that there are talks in place and assign them a month or two in advance.

I have also heard that not all members are up to preparing a paper for discussion. I say that's hogwash. Everyone who has at least completed high school has the skills and resources necessary to pick out a topic, run that by the Education Officer, research, prepare and deliver such a talk. As a matter of fact, in Germany it is the requirement of each EA and Fellowcraft to give such a talk and lead a discussion before receiving the next degree. I would like to implement that here, too, but I'm sure I would be accused of "holding up candidates."

This is what's going to save our fraternity and keep us relevant in the 21st century. I can't imagine that the fraternity has survived for so long based on 200+ years of reading minutes and drinking coffee in the anteroom.

If anyone needs any help or wants to get ideas for talks, or even comment on my ideas, feel free to comment here or shoot me an email offline.



**Topics:** Masonic Stuff | No Comments »

### Quality or Quantity?

By admin | January 21, 2010

Our society seems focused on bigger is better in so many areas of life. We want a big home for our family. Bigger cars are better. But what about bigger Lodges, Chapters, Councils, Commanderies, Churches etc.?

Last night we had our annual inspection at my Chapter. It was stated that we have just over 320 members at present. At most meetings we get anywhere between 12-20 members to show up. Companions from a nearby Chapter were there, and it was announced that they have the highest attendance percentage at their meetings than anyone else. They usually get at least 40% of their membership out to every meeting. Their total membership? 32 members. So while they aren't getting more Companions out to their meetings, they are getting a higher percentage, and that shows that they

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probably don't have a lot of "dead weight" or "dues paying members only" on their roster.

At least in Ohio we have become obsessed with membership numbers. As the WMI generation begins to pass on to their great reward the Grand Bodies of Ohio have become nervous about dwindling membership, coming up with new membership programs to get the numbers back up. While we all know of a few men we think would be great members, I try to be careful about who I ask, because I want the person I give the petition to to be an active member, not just one who will pay their dues and never come back. I have been criticized in the past for not handing out petitions more often, however I try and get a picture of the man's life to whom I will give a petition before handing one out. While the degree experience is special, the memory of that will fade as time goes by if it is not seen or portrayed again, and indifference towards the body sets in.

Personally I would never join a body without knowing that I will have the desire and time to attend its meetings at least fairly frequently. But I know a number of people who just want to collect dues cards and say they belong to everything without ever being physically able to attend. And then there are others who just can't say no when a petition is offered to them.

I know I won't make a lot of friends by saying this, but I would rather see fewer, but more engaged members vs. large rosters of members that do not attend. While I realize that a large amount of so-called "dues paying members only" are homebound or otherwise unable to attend for health reasons, and a number of them, in Ohio, at least, are those living elsewhere in the country who don't want to demit from their mother Lodge, Chapter, Council, Commandery etc. but there also is a large number of local members who just don't care to show up. And that's a shame.

My next post will be about keeping members engaged by offering interesting topics of discussion.



**Topics:** Masonic Stuff | No Comments »

## A Year of Changes

By admin | January 18, 2010

2009 was a crazy year of many changes. First we gave up homeschooling and enrolled both kids in a new school: a Lutheran private school in Toledo. So far both have been very happy with the new school. Luman is in second grade and absolutely LOVES it and Fynn began preschool 3 days a week. He will start Kindergarten in the fall.

We also ended up leaving our church. This was a difficult decision, but one we found necessary. With the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America deciding in August at its churchwide assembly to allow and sanctify homosexual partnerships, the last straw was drawn and we decided as a family that we can no longer belong to this institution. So we left the church I and our children were baptized in. This decision weighed heavily on us, however we are now at home in our new church, which is also where the kids attend school.

Next I became Deputy Division Commander of the 6th Division, Knights Templar of Ohio. This has turned out to be a great honor, but it also comes with a fair amount of work.

What will 2010 bring? No one knows, but so far one thing has remained constant: change. It's a safe bet to say that I won't die of boredom this year!



**Topics:** Church Stuff, General Stuff, Masonic Stuff, Me Stuff | No Comments »

## I Thought he was a Christian

By admin | April 9, 2009

Today we learn, via WorldNetDaily, that Chairman Obama has not made it to church since moving to Washington, D.C. Even Bill Clinton visited church shortly after taking office in 1993.

Obama made a big deal about his leaving Jeremiah Wright's so-called church, after Jeremiah Wright's rhetoric caught up with them, yet no formal affiliation has been announced. Politico reports that Obama tends to spend Sunday mornings working out in the gym vs. offering worship to our Creator.

I find this particularly striking, particularly during Holy Week. I guess we can assume that Obama will not be in church this Easter Sunday, the most holy of days in the Christian calendar.

Earlier in the week Obama announced, while on his European Apology Tour (EAT) that the United States is no longer a Christian nation.

As George Washington so appropriately worded it, "It is impossible to rightly govern the world without God and the Bible."

I therefore call on Chairman Obama to declare his faith and ask how he plans to steer this nation out of the trouble we are in without offering proper worship to God?



**Topics:** Church Stuff, Political Stuff | 2 Comments »

### Whose President is he?

By admin | April 9, 2009

We learn more about Chairman Obama's European Apology Tour (EAT) every day. Now it seems that French President Nicolas Sarkozy had a plane ready to take Obama to Normandy to visit the cemetery where over 9000 American soldiers are buried. This has been the custom of all Presidents when visiting France for the first time. However, it seems that Obama declined out of fear for offending the Germans.

Speaking as someone who has great respect for (post 1945 Federal Republic of) Germany, having lived there for 9 years myself, I can only express my complete astonishment over this slight. And as someone who, unfortunately, has never had an opportunity to visit this solemn ground and who would jump at the chance, if presented, I can only ask whose president is he? And then to play the charade and dash off to Iraq to visit our troops shortly thereafter... This is unbelievable to me. I hope our men and women faithfully serving in our armed forces are taking note!



**Topics:** Political Stuff | No Comments »

### We're not?

By admin | April 8, 2009

This week, while on his European Apology Tour (EAT), Chairman Obama said that the US is no longer a Christian or Jewish nation. I find the timing of this especially astounding. Holy Week is the most holy and celebratory time in the Christian year, so this usurper chooses this week to make the statement.

Is he aware that this nation was founded on by Judeo-Christian principles and the practice of these virtues? Let's quote George Washington, for example:

- "Reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principles."
- "Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, religion and morality are indispensable supports."

Washington, as other contemporary scholars and teachers following the principles of the Enlightenment understood that an enlightened society can only function under the principles of morality. And what defines morality? Religion.

In my opinion this seals the fate of our beloved nation. Without a basis in religion this country is doomed for electing a so-called leader without moral principles.

The silent majority needs to take action now. More on this later.



**Topics:** Political Stuff | No Comments »

## I'm back

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**By admin** | April 5, 2009

After a crazy late summer, fall and winter I have decided to get back to posting. Hopefully this time my return will be, as our left wing friends might like to say, more sustainable.

So why the return now? I guess, like so many of you out there, I have become so fed up with the direction this country has turned since January 20 of this year that I feel I need to use this platform as yet another to speak out against what is happening.

So why today? Today is Palm Sunday, which starts off the most holy time in the Christian calendar. We celebrated worship this morning at church (as we start off most every week). This week symbolizes what I hope will happen to our beloved country: Trial, Death and Resurrection from the grave. With this resurrection those who believe were saved by the sacrifice of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

My hope is that we believers of liberty and fidelity will equally experience a renewal of the principles on which this country was founded. It will not be easy and the road towards improvement will be long and difficult, yet I believe that if the so-called silent majority speaks out we will return to the path of righteousness this country was founded on.

More later!



**Topics:** Church Stuff, Political Stuff | No Comments »

## An interesting and must-see video

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**By admin** | July 17, 2008



**Topics:** Political Stuff | No Comments »

### Happy Independence Day!

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**By admin** | July 4, 2008

I want to take this time back from everything that has been going on to wish everyone a Happy Independence Day! I hope everyone has been able to enjoy the holiday with family and friends. I also hope everyone takes time to think about what this holiday really means, and takes time to give thanks to the men and women of our armed forces who make sure that we can be sitting here still enjoying our freedom.

Here's hoping that we will be able to be contemplating our freedoms this time next year, too!



**Topics:** General Stuff | No Comments »

### Happy Memorial Day

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**By admin** | May 26, 2008

I know I haven't posted in a month, but today I have to come out and tip my hat to our troops, the reason for this holiday. I want to personally extend my hand to everyone who has served, and to those families of those who have given up so much to offer their sons and daughters to our country in defense of our freedom. My heart particularly goes out to those families who have paid the ultimate price for our country, that of losing a loved-one for this beloved land.

You've heard it before, you'll hear it again: Freedom isn't free and we need to honor our veterans and those in active duty and reserves today.



**Topics:** General Stuff | No Comments »

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